

VZCZCXRO9868
RR RUEHLMC
DE RUEHLM #0778/01 1501201
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 301201Z MAY 07
FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6156
INFO RUCPDOG/USDOC WASHDC
RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHDC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1025
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0151
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 7132
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 5235
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 000778

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/INS
DOL/ILAB FOR TINA MCCARTER
MCC FOR S. GROFF, D. TETER, D. NASSIRY AND E. BURKE

E.O 12958: N/A
TAGS: [EAID](#) [ECON](#) [TBIO](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: NATIONAL DECLARATION ON PREVENTION OF HIV/AIDS
IN WORKPLACES

¶1. Summary: An International Labor Organization-initiated National Tripartite Declaration on Prevention of HIV/AIDS at workplaces in Sri Lanka was signed recently. Partners in this new program include government agencies, trade unions, trade chambers and employers. The Declaration describes plans to create awareness of HIV/AIDS in the workplace and reduce the social stigma attached to the disease. Although Sri Lanka is a low prevalence country for HIV/AIDS, many factors make it vulnerable to an outbreak of the disease. Lack of resources could hinder full implementation of the program, though some progress has been made since the signing of the declaration, mainly due to ILO efforts. End Summary.

¶2. Sri Lankan government ministries and agencies, chambers of commerce, trade unions, a tourist hotels association, and employer organizations signed a national declaration on prevention of HIV/AIDS in workplaces on April 3, 2007. The declaration endorses the guidelines of the International Labor Organization's Code of Practice in the World of Work. The signatory organizations have committed to establish HIV/AIDS prevention and education programs in workplaces and ensure zero tolerance of discrimination associated with the disease, both in the public and private sectors.

SRI LANKA - LESS THAN 0.1 PERCENT INFECTED

¶3. Sri Lanka is a low prevalence country for HIV/AIDS, with less than 0.1 percent of the adult population infected. However, Sri Lanka is vulnerable to an increased rate of HIV infection due to many factors including a large youth population, an increasing number of sex workers, internally and externally migrating populations, and large number of tea plantation workers lacking basic health education. Lack of reliable data makes it difficult to predict changes in the rate of infection. The possibility of the disease being transmitted rapidly within the country makes it an issue of national importance, deserving high priority within workplaces.

COMMITMENTS MADE BY THE SIGNATORIES

¶4. The signatories to this declaration have made the following commitments:

¶A. All signatories will:

-- Establish a management team in conformity with ILO's Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work

-- Encourage formulating in-house policies and programs in keeping with the code of practice on HIV/AIDS and the world of work and the national AIDS policy

1B. Trade unions and employers organizations will take the lead in protecting workers and their families from HIV/AIDS.

1C. The Ministry of Labor Relations and Manpower will:

-- Educate its employees on HIV/AIDS and implement the Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work, both in the ministry and its associated agencies

-- Encourage implementation of the code of practice on HIV/AIDS at all workplaces in the country

-- Encourage HIV/AIDS education to prevent spread of the disease at workplaces, provide care and support for infected employees and maintain zero tolerance for discriminatory practices

INITIAL ACTIONS TO IMPLEMENT DECLARATION

15. The Declaration is being printed and will be widely disseminated among workplaces. So far, fourteen workplaces have signed the Declaration. The ILO plans to conduct a workshop in June to develop an HIV policy for trade unions. Additionally, the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce has initiated an awareness program to reach 100,000 Free Trade Zone employees.

16. Comment: Financial and human resource constraints could hinder

COLOMBO 00000778 002 OF 002

successful implementation of the declaration. The ILO is making commendable efforts with its limited resources to move this initiative forward. However, success will require similar commitment by the trade unions, employers and government agencies to move the Declaration from paper into reality.

BLAKE